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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000693

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/29
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: CFK ANNOUNCES CUBA HAS AUTHORIZED
DISSIDENT HILDA MOLINA TO LEAVE THE ISLAND

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 0657
[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 0075
[1](#)C. BUENOS AIRES 0025
[1](#)D. 08 BUENOS AIRES 0701 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Classified by CDA Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Argentine media are reporting that President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) announced June 12 that Cuban authorities issued a passport to dissident neurosurgeon Hilda Molina and are allowing her to leave the island. For 15 years, Molina had been seeking permission to travel to Argentina to visit her son, Roberto Quinones, who lives in Argentina with his Argentine wife and children. CFK, who visited Cuba January 18-21, said the government of Raul Castro deserved a vote of thanks for the gesture.

[1](#)2. (SBU) According to some media reports, CFK said Molina was already at the Argentine Embassy in Havana with her Cuban passport to obtain a visa and make travel arrangements. Other media reports claimed the Argentine Embassy was issuing Molina an Argentine passport. There is no information yet on when Molina might travel. In May 2008, Cuban authorities authorized Molina's 89-year-old mother to travel to Argentina on short notice.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Cable news channel C5N interviewed Molina's daughter-in-law, Veronica Scarpatti, who said she had spoken the previous evening, June 11, with Molina, who had made no mention of any breakthrough in obtaining permission to travel. The daughter-in-law said she was informed of this development by journalists calling for her reaction. She said her husband, Molina's son, was travelling in southern Argentina and did not yet know the news.

Comment

[1](#)4. (C) If true, the lifting of Cuba's travel ban on Hilda Molina will remove a long-standing irritant from Argentina's bilateral agenda with Cuba. The Cuban government's refusal to allow Hilda Molina to travel to visit her only child and grandchildren had made her a cause celebre, and opposition figures routinely criticized the GOA for failing to "free Hilda." At the end of 2004, then-president Nestor Kirchner forced out several Argentine diplomats after the Argentine Embassy in Havana took in Hilda Molina for 24 hours and then, in an embarrassing reversal, asked her to leave. In 2006, Kirchner was reportedly nonplussed by Castro's refusal to acknowledge or answer Kirchner's letter to him requesting an exit visa for Molina. In January of this year, when CFK visited Cuba, she was criticized for not meeting with Molina or publicly making an issue of her virtual imprisonment on the island. Although it has been a long 15-year wait for Molina to travel, CFK and FM Jorge Taiana will likely seek to

take credit for the success of their "quiet diplomacy."
KELLY